The Middle Euphrates and its Transformation from the 3rd to the 7th c.: The case of Dibsi Faraj*

Anna Leone, Alexander Sarantis

This paper will discuss the third- to seventh-century development of Dibsi Faraj, a fortified citadel situated on the middle reaches of the Euphrates River in modern Syria. The site had a long period of occupation from Antiquity to the ninth century, when it was abandoned. It was later reoccupied in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This paper however concentrates on the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods during which a series of fortification works, churches and bathing complexes were erected. The wider political and religious contexts for these works include the wars fought between the eastern Roman and Sassanid Persian empires and their Ghassanid and Lakhmid allies, and the growing fame and popularity of the shrine of St Sergius at Resafa. Among the most interesting finds are fragments of the Anastasian military inscription, known also from sites in Palestine, which confirms the presence at Dibsi Faraj of a military garrison, probably comprising limitanei *troops, in the early sixth century. Continued activity at the site across the seventh century reinforces the argument that the last eastern Roman-Sassanid war and early Islamic conquests did not profoundly damage the society and economy of northern Oriens.*

The remains of the fortified settlement of Dibsi Faraj bear witness to an important military and cultural settlement on the Middle Euphrates (modern Syria) in Late Antiquity. This paper will present new insights into unpublished material from this site, excavated by Richard Harper, then deputy Director of the British School at Ankara, in the 1970s. Harper's excavation took place in collaboration with the Department of Antiquities of Syria, as one of the activities conducted in preparation for the construction of the Tabqa Dam, completed in 1973.

The following discussion of the building history of Dibsi Faraj will contribute to a fuller picture of its appearance, function and possible population in different phases. As well as discussing what Harper's evidence tells us about the fortress, the paper will, for the first time, set this material in a wider regional context, using the site as a case study for a discussion of

* We would like to thank all the authors who have contributed to the study of the finds and the stratigraphic sequence at Dibis Faraj: Agnès Vokaer, Coralie Clover, Philip Kenrick, Massimiliano Munzi, Robert Taylor-Wilson, Mark Jackson, Nairusz Haidar Vela, Victoria Leitch, Denys Feissel. We would like in particular to thank Denys Feissel for the reading and the integration of the inscription of Anastasus' law that is mentioned in this paper. Finally, we would like to thank the three anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments. Any remaining mistakes are our own. This paper is dedicated to the memory of Richard Harper and Tony Wilkinson.

the military, infrastructural and cultural history of the Middle Euphrates region in Late Antiquity. This was in many ways a unique *limes* zone, the Middle Euphrates carving its way through the northern Syrian steppe landscape, running from west to east following the great bend at Barbalissus.[1] Its strategic importance stemmed from the fact that it both connected and, because of its fortifications, separated Roman and Persian territories. At the same time, it bisected the Upper Mesopotamian frontier region north of the river from the *limitanei* and federate Ghassanid controlled northern Syrian frontier zone to the south. Here, the focus will, in particular, be on the stretch of the river east of Dibsi Faraj as far as Circesium, and the *Strata Diocletiana* road, which ran south of Sura, connecting the Euphrates with Resafa and then Palmyra in the south.

This overview of the area across Late Antiquity, tying archaeological evidence for the built landscape to historical sources for military and political events in the region has not been attempted to date. Instead, studies of the area have tended to either focus on individual sites, concentrate on the earlier Roman period, or synthesise archaeological evidence from the eastern frontier regions as a whole.[2] This paper aims to fill this gap, bringing new archaeological material to light and using it to answer broader historical questions concerning the strategic importance of the Middle Euphrates frontier, the nature of its elites, the organisation of defence and frontier military resources, and religious life. It is to the identification of the site that we first turn.

The location and identification of Dibsi Faraj

The fortified citadel of Dibsi Faraj[3] was located 17km east of *Barbalissus-Balis*, occupying a limestone area at the east end of the Dibsi plateau from which it controlled access to seasonal grazing areas and fertile agricultural land. It was also thus on the route to the ancient site of Resafa- Sergiopolis, named after Saint Sergius who was martyred there.[4]

---

[1] Geography: Millar 1993, ch.12.1; Comfort 2008, 9–11 and 131. Geography of the Roman-Persian frontier zone: Naval Intelligence Division 1942, 19–194.

[2] Chapot 1907 is the main earlier synthesis. Books including substantial sections on the Middle Euphrates in the Roman and Late Roman periods: Edwell 2008; Millar 1993, chs.4, 5 and 12; Pollard 2000. On specific sites: Lauffray 1983. Discussion of the *Strata Diocletiana*: Konrad, Baldus, and Ulbert 2001. Synthesis of the literature: Sarantis 2013a, 348–52.

[3] Dibsi Faraj is the modern name of the site, but we do not know how and when the nearby modern settlement acquired this toponym.

[4] Reasons for the importance of the cult of Sergius in the East: Haarer 2006, 37. Resafa-Sergiopolis is about 70 km south of the site of Dibsi Faraj.

The site has been identified with the ancient settlement of Athis which was, allegedly, re-named Neoceasarea in Late Antiquity. Although some scholars have accepted this identification uncritically, it remains debatable. According to the argument, the site's earliest name was Athis.[5] The Geography of Ptolemy named Athis as the only site between Barbalissus and Sura, in the region of Chalybonitis.[6] Meanwhile, the section of the Peutinger Table showing the road between Palmyra and Resafa indicates that a site named Attas was located 12km from Barbalisso.[7] However, the Table's depiction of this section of the Euphrates is heavily distorted, all of its distances and locations being incorrect.[8]

Other scholars have identified Dibsi with ancient Thapsacus, based on their interpretation of a passage in Pliny's *Natural History* and the narrations of Alexander's crossing of the Euphrates.[9] Their argument is founded primarily on the testimony of Arrian, which informs us that Alexander ordered a fleet to be built in Phoenicia and Cyprus, to be brought overland to Thapsacus.[10]

Fig. 1

It has thus been reasoned that Thapsacus could not have been far from the Mediterranean coast, which supports its identification with Dibsi, one of the closest points on the Euphrates to the Levantine seaboard. An additional argument is that the names Thapsacus and Dibsi are vaguely similar phonetically, specifically in the sound 'psi'.

This second hypothesis has been refuted on the basis that Thapsacus had a long history of occupation, stretching back to the Hellenistic period, whereas archaeological evidence from Dibsi indicates that the site was in use only from the first century AD, and lacks a clear Hellenistic occupation phase.[11] Bronze Age material found west of the site certainly suggests

---

[5] Harper 1975, 321–324. Also in favour of the identification of Dibsi with Athis: Dussaud 1927, 453. According to Strabo XVI.1.27, this was a place where the crossing of the river was easy. Dibsi Faraj is indeed in an area where the crossing was possible in some seasons.
[6] Ptol. *Geog.* V.15. 17.
[7] *Tabula Peutingeriana*, Segment XI.2 (thirteenth-century maps of the Roman roads probably as they were in the fourth-century).
[8] On using the medieval Peutinger Map for interpreting Late Antiquity: Salway 2005. General discussion on the composition and date of the table: Talbert 2010.
[9] Plin. *Nat. Hist.* V.22. Alexander's crossing of the Euphrates: Arr. *Anabasis* III.7, VII.19.3. Identification of Dibsi Faraj with Thapsacus: Chapot 1907, 204 note 4; Bell 1910 and Honigmann 1934. In *Der Neue Pauly* 12.1, 242, Thapsakos is identified with Qal'at Nagm. Discussion of the evidence and proposed identification: Gawlikowski 1996.
[10] Arr. *Anabasis* III.7.1 and VII.19.3: "Aristobulus says that he found at Babylon the fleet with Nearchus, which had sailed from…and another which had been conveyed from Phoenicia, consisting of the Phoenincian quinqueremes, three quadriremes, twelve triremes and thirty triacontors. These had been taken to pieces and conveyed to the river Euphrates from Phoenica to the city of Thapsacus'.
[11] Harper 1975, 321.

the existence of an earlier settlement. However, even though the existence of a Hellenistic settlement located in an area not explored at the time of the excavation cannot be ruled out, the lack of Hellenistic material from either this or the main site casts doubt on its identification with Thapsacus. The Athis identification also remains open to debate in light of the lack of evidence of an Early Imperial settlement in the excavated area sufficiently monumental to attract the attention of geographers as eminent as Pliny and Ptolemy.

Moving onto Late Antiquity, it has been suggested that Athis was renamed Neocaesarea during the third century, when it received monumental fortifications for the first time.[12] The change of name is attributed to the imperial government, perhaps due to the institutional upgrade of what had been a mere village at Athis. While there is no evidence to support this hypothesis, we do have a reference in the fifth-century *Patrum Nicenorum Nomina*[13] to a Bishop Paulus of Neocaesarea under the heading VII – Provincia Syria Celes, and the testimony of George of Cyprus, who refers to its location in the territory of Saint Sergius' martyrdom.[14] This would at least place Neocaesarea in approximately the same region as Dibsi.

The name Neocaesarea is, moreover, mentioned by Procopius in book 2 of the *Buildings* as one of the Middle Euphrates sites Justinian fortified, "on the furthest borders of Euphratesia".[15] Following his descriptions of Zenobia, Sura and Resafa, Procopius lists here the settlements of Barbalissus, Neocaesarea, Gaboulon, Pentacomia, and Europos before digressing to describe work at Hemerium and Hierapolis.[16] He then discusses refortification work at Zeugma and Neocaesarea, which he refers to as fortified towns.[17]

This section of the text thus mentions a series of Euphrates sites between Sura and Zeugma in no particular order, in addition to Hierapolis and Hemerium, the location of which is unknown, but which was presumably, like Hierapolis, situated away from the river. The Middle Euphrates sites which have been located with some certainty, meanwhile, are all located on the southward-flowing stretch of the river, from Zeugma to Barbalissus (modern Balis), near to the Euphrates bend: in addition to Zeugma, which is comparatively well-researched, Gaboulon has been identified with modern Jabbul; and Europos with Jerablus. [18] While neither Neocaesarea nor Pentacomia have been located, it would make sense for these to have been

---

[12] Harper 1975, 322.

[13] Gelzer, Hilgenfeld, Cuntz 1995.

[14] *Patrum Nicoenorum Nomina*: Paulus 63, p.101. Dibsi Faraj was located on the pilgrimage route to Resafa. Discussion of the statement of George of Cyprus: Harper 1975, 322.

[15] Procop. *Aed.* II.9.10. Modern discussion: Harper 1975, 321–322.

[16] Procop. *Aed.* II.9.10–17.

[17] Procop. *Aed.* II.9.18–20.

[18] Identification of Europos with Jerablus: Chapot 1907, 280. Example of work on Zeugma: Comfort and Ergeç 2001; Gawlikowski 1996. Balis: Golvin 1945.

situated along the river east of Barbalissus, a strategically vital region which would otherwise have been neglected, uncharacteristically, by Procopius.[19] This is reinforced by the texts mentioned above, which place Neocaesarea in the vicinity of Resafa and, therefore, *en route* to the *Strata Diocletiana*.

While Dibsi Faraj could theoretically have been a fortress not mentioned in our textual sources, its imposing fortifications and hilltop location suggest that it played an important strategic role in Late Antiquity, thereby adding weight to its association with either Neocaesarea or Pentacomia. Indeed, while neither site is mentioned by Procopius in his *Wars* narrative on the Roman-Persian conflicts in the reign of Justinian, his inclusion of both in the *Buildings* suggests that they had been the focus of some sort of imperial expenditure.

The archive of the excavation at Dibsi Faraj

The discovery of the archive of unpublished excavation materials from Dibsi Faraj was fortuitous. It included 128 boxes of pottery and glass, over 500 photographs and negatives, around 80 plans, all the excavation notes, catalogues of finds, and various preliminary reports. The excavation project took place between 1970–1973, and was mainly funded by Dumbarton Oaks, with some contribution from the Kelsey Museum at the University of Michigan. It was part of a UNESCO-coordinated effort to salvage and document as many sites as possible before the surrounding area was inundated by water due to the creation of Lake Assad on the Euphrates, the so-called Tabqa Dam project.[20] Richard Harper, who was the director of the excavation, initially shipped some of the finds and the entire excavation archive to London in 1973. This archive of research materials ended up in Harper's garage in Durham for over 30 years before it was donated by Harper's daughter (Eleanor Glenton) to the Department of Archaeology at the University of Durham in 2013. Tony Wilkinson, who had worked as a young geographer at the site, brought the archive to Durham and started to work on it with Anna Leone.[21]

After five seasons of excavation, three preliminary reports were produced, one appearing in the 1975 issue of *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, and two further papers on some of the Roman to Islamic period finds, as well as work at another Euphrates fort flooded by the dam,

[19] Procopius' tendency to exaggerate building work in his coverage of the East in the *Buildings*: Ulbert 2000.
[20] Freedman and Lundquist 1979.
[21] Tony Wilkinson sadly passed away a few year later, leaving the legacy of the archive to Anna Leone.

Pağnik Öreni.[22] However, the full excavation has never been published. The site's historical importance, combined with its current inaccessibility, makes full analysis and publication vital.

The citadel and its phases

The site presents different phases of occupation, with the most important concentrated between the third and the seventh centuries. The earliest period dates back to the first century AD, and is represented by a rock-cut funerary chamber, mostly destroyed by the later setting of the city wall and other small walls. The original function of the city is hard to identify. The latest phase is well attested archaeologically by one large L-shaped building and some domestic structures. Evidence of occupation suggested that the site continued to be inhabited until 895, when it was abandoned following an earthquake, before being occupied again in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[23] These earlier and later phases of occupation will be not discussed in the paper, the focus of which will be the late antique / Late Roman to Early Byzantine periods.

The excavation extended over 8 distinct areas (area 7 does not exist, but there is an area 0). The excavation was conducted in two ways: 1. in Wheeler boxes and elongated trenches, 2. buildings were instead extensively excavated using the open-area method.[24] The paper will discuss the different phases of occupation, rather than the different areas.

The first fortification at the end of the third century

The first significant building phase at Dibsi Faraj is represented by the construction of the citadel in the Diocletianic period at the end of the third century. The chronology of the first phase of fortification is confirmed by the stratigraphic sequence.[25] This initial fortification

---

[22] Harper 1974a; Harper 1974b; Harper 1975. Finds and Pağnik Öreni: Harper 1977; Harper 1980.

[23] The analysis of later phase of occupation will be included in the forthcoming volume published by Dumbarton Oaks: Leone forthcoming, as will a recent reconsideration of the finds, which has shown that there was second Islamic phase in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Discussion on the Islamic phases: Harper 1975, e.g. 324.

[24] For an analysis of the different methodologies: Sanders, James and Carter Johnson 2017.

[25] A similar chronology has also been suggested, for instance, for the inner fortification of Palmyra. On the different phases of reconstruction and restorations of the walls of Palmyra: Zanini 1995; Chapot 1907, 284. For further bibliography on issues of dating the fortress of Palmyra and the building techniques used, characterised by large blocks and a rubble core: Juchniewicz, As'ad, and al Hariri 2010. On Diocletianic frontier work: Arce 2015, 102. See also nn.36-38 below. In reference to Dibsi, a detailed publication of the stratigraphic sequence will be provided in the full publication of the excavation. Traces of the earlier phases of the citadel have been identified in several areas of excavation. Across the site, it was discovered that the primary wall was fairly deeply founded, wherever possible set into the natural limestone bedrock and built probably exclusively with massive blocks of the same soft

surrounded the hilltop and was characterized by square interval towers and four corner towers (Fig. 2). The intramural area was around 5ha in size. A lower-lying site was located outside of the citadel, meanwhile, and covered an area of around 20ha. This extramural area was later occupied by a modern settlement and excavation there was only limited. It did, though, include the discovery of an extramural church and a building with a mosaic, of which only one room was excavated, the function of which is hard to determine.[26]

Fig. 2

Returning to the wall, 17 interval towers were identified out of the 34 that were probably part of the full fortification. A pair of towers also protected each of the four identified gates. The external face of one of the small interval towers was exposed on the west wall. The main gate was positioned on the southern citadel wall.

From its hill-top position, the citadel dominated the surrounding landscape, as well as the Euphrates, the right bank of which it overlooked. This adaptation of a fortress to elevated terrain resulting in its irregular form is typical of later Roman fortifications.[27] The peculiarity of Dibsi Faraj in comparison with the architecture of other Late Antique fortifications is the presence of rectangular towers.[28] These were not normally considered to be as defensively effective as square, circular or multi-angular towers because their long straight edges were more vulnerable to flanking attacks by battering rams and other siege engines.[29] This may be one of the reasons for the renovation of these structures in the next phase of building work, discussed below.

Fig.3

Inside the wall, a casemate dating to the same period as the fortification was excavated in area 1. It was located adjacent to the northern defences, to the east of the north-western gateway. The building was organized in two parts. The northern part was probably the

---

limestone. The Byzantine renovation of the wall probably early in the reign of Anastasius was essentially a re-facing exercise: in general, the remains of the original structure were found to either underlie or be used effectively almost as an inner wythe (a vertical unit of walling) of the defensive circuit when it was renewed.

[26] The excavation of this extramural structure is not mentioned in Harper 1975.

[27] Differences between early imperial and Late Roman fortifications with bibliography: Sarantis and Christie 2013, 255–261.

[28] In the Roman period, square towers appear to have been more common in the eastern frontiers (Gregory 1995, 167). On projecting towers: Johnson 1983, 37.

[29] Johnson 1983, 38–50. Siege warfare tactics in Late Antiquity: Whitby 2013.

principia, the headquarters of the fort, while the southern area possibly served as accommodation for a garrison. The entrance to the south was located in the vicinity of two latrines and led to a central room paved with mosaics[30]. Three apsed rooms, again paved with mosaics, were located west of this hall. The southern part of the building was only partially excavated but it contained a large apsed area paved with limestone.

Fig. 4

The construction of the citadel complex should probably be viewed in connection with the strengthening of the frontier region following the Roman-Persian conflicts of 297–98.[31] After his defeat near Callinicum in AD 297, the Caesar Galerius defeated the Persians in their territory and captured King Narseh's baggage train, treasury and royal harem in 298.[32] Galerius led his army back to Roman territory along the Middle Euphrates. This culminated in an extremely favourable treaty for the Romans, confirming their occupation of Upper Mesopotamia as far as the Tigris basin and giving them five client states on the opposite banks of the Tigris in the Mesopotamian-Armenian frontier zone.

This agreement did not affect Roman control of the Euphrates, the eastern limits of which remained Circesium. However, the strategic importance of the Euphrates region had become clear during the various third century Roman-Persian wars. In particular, both empires had proved to be vulnerable to attack along this river, which connected the wealthy Roman northern Syrian and Persian Lower Mesopotamian provinces.[33] In 252/53, Shapur I invaded Roman Syria along the Middle Euphrates, capturing a series of Roman bases, including Sura, before defeating a Roman army at Barbalissus, and then sacking northern Syrian cities, such as Hierapolis, Chalcis and Antioch.[34] Zeugma on the western stretch of the Middle Euphrates was also captured. Subsequent raids reduced Dura and Circesium, the former never recovering from its sack in *ca.* 256/57, attested by the incredible archaeological remains of the Persian siege.[35] Dibsi's location along the main route between Sura and Barbalissus makes it very likely that it was affected by these events, especially bearing in mind its lack of defences.

---

[30] It needs to be stressed here that the nature of the excavations conducted by trenches, very rarely uncovered entire buildings. This makes it particularly difficult to fully reconstruct the plans of the buildings.
[31] Leadbetter 2009, 88–96.
[32] Galerius' campaign and subsequent treaty: Leadbetter 2009, 88–96; Millar 1993,177–181; Dignas and Winter 2007, 84–88. Contemporary accounts of Galerius' campaign: Dodgeon and Lieu 1991, 125–134.
[33] Third-century Roman-Persian military campaigns: Edwell 2008, ch.5; Millar 1993, 141–173; Hartmann 2017, 1047–1067, at 1048–1051 and 1054–1057; Dignas and Winter 2007, 70–88; Börm 2016, 617–626.
[34] Contemporary accounts: Dodgeon and Lieu 1991, ch.3.
[35] James 2011; Leriche 1993.

Diocletian (284–305) invested heavily in the infrastructure of the Middle Euphrates, as in other frontier regions.[36] Having failed to withstand the Persian invasions of 252–56 and 260, bases like Callinicum and Circesium now enjoyed a substantial upgrade, although there is little evidence that any forts were built between Sura and Circesium.[37] It is possible that a Palmyrene-era mud wall existed at Zenobia, but there is no evidence of renovation at this site prior to the reign of Anastasius.

Diocletian also funded the construction of forts and fortress cities along the road that became known as the *Strata Diocletiana*, from Sura on the Middle Euphrates to Palmyra.[38] This defensive system related closely to that of the Middle Euphrates, designed to protect northern Syria from invasions emanating from north-eastern Arabia and, beyond it, southern Mesopotamia.[39] It was thus intended to compensate for the demise of the client state at Palmyra, which had previously defended north-western Arabia from nomadic Arab raiders. Legionary bases along this communication included Palmyra, Resafa, Oresa and Sura. In each case, archaeological research has revealed the presence of small military forts integrated / built within the walls of civilian settlements. What remained of the city of Palmyra, for example, was now endowed with a military camp as well as a new urban circuit wall which reduced the intramural area of the city.[40] The *ca*. 30ha settlement at Sura, meanwhile, comprised a small square fort and surrounding *canabae*.[41] A similar situation pertained with the *quadriburgium* at Tetrapyrgium.[42] Watchtowers dotted the road between these bases. Fortification works at the majority of sites consisted of rubble core and mud brick facings in this Diocletianic phase. Some of these sites, including Cholle, were, like Dibsi Faraj, located on hilltops or mounds, while others such as Resafa were situated in open terrain. The location of Dibsi was presumably determined by the topography of the area overlooking the river and providing easy access to the water.

The fortification of Dibsi Faraj complements this picture by providing physical evidence of Tetrarchic-era Middle Euphrates fortification work west of the immediate frontier bases of the *Strata Diocletiana* and Circesium. This confirms the importance of defending the entire Middle Euphrates route to Syria in light of the earlier Persian attacks mentioned above. Like

[36] Summary of the works: Millar 1993, 181–90; Pollard 2000, 71–73.
[37] The Diocletianic fortifications of Circesium are mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus: Amm. Marc. 23.5.1–2.
[38] Konrad, Baldus, and Ulbert 2001. Wider bibliographical discussion of these fortifications: Sarantis 2013a, 348–349 and 351–352.
[39] Konrad 1999; Liebeschuetz 1977, 496–97.
[40] Overview: Intagliata 2017 and 2018, esp. Chs.5–6. Debate concerning the date of fortifications: Seyrig 1950; Van Berchem 1954. See also n.25 above.
[41] Konrad 1999, 398–400.
[42] Konrad 1999, 400–404.

the bases just mentioned, Dibsi Faraj contained a garrison with a military headquarters. However, it differs in its lack of a small, quadrilinear fort, structured around a typical cruciform street grid system, contained within the walls of a larger civilian settlement. Instead, this was a larger, irregular fortified settlement, encompassing military and non-military structures. This might suggest a closer integration of military and civilian populations, a trend that would intensify across the empire in Late Antiquity.[43]

The fourth- and fifth-century interventions – the period of major expansion

The fourth century saw another phase of major expansion and monumentalization of the site. At the beginning of the century, construction started on a large residential complex in area 0. The building was left unfinished, though, and, in the second half of the century, a large basilica was built inside the walls, cutting across this residential area. The basilica had different phases of transformation. The original plan was characterized by three naves and two external porticoes, running down the longer sides of the church. A second phase saw the enlargement of the structure into a five-aisled church and the addition of a small apse, to the side of the main apse, where relics were most likely placed.

Fig. 5

Based on the mosaics and the stratigraphic evidence, this second phase can be dated to the first half of the fifth century. The mosaics depicted geometric motifs and birds. The two floor mosaics at the entrance contained motifs which recall those found in jewellery and on silver plate.[44] Similar decorative schemes have also been noted in churches in Antioch.[45] Mosaics in the middle of the northern side of the church featured three octagons containing the Greek names: *Melitis*, *Sergis*, *Paulos*. On the west side of the church, another votive inscription advertised the name of: Βάχχος θουρουρός, or 'Bacchos the porter'. It was certainly inscribed there, near to the entrance, in order to be read by cathechumens leaving church after their prayers. From an architectural perspective, it is worth mentioning the presence of a narthex, quite uncommon in Late Antiquity, although, interestingly, another has

[43] Lee 2007, esp. chs.5–7; Fear 2007; Whately 2013, 234–238.
[44] Donceel- Voûte 1988, 85–86
[45] Donceel- Voûte 1988, 84–86

been recorded at the church of the Holy Cross in nearby Resafa-Sergiopolis: the relationship between the two settlements will be considered further below.[46]

Fig. 6

The fifth century was in fact a period of major refurbishment and expansion at the site. Not only was the citadel church expanded at this time, but a cemetery martyr church also built just outside of the citadel wall at the beginning of the century. The latter church can be precisely dated thanks to a mosaic inscription stating that the construction of this holy martyrium was realized by the priest Jacobos and the *perioudeutes*[47] Paulos in the month of Xanthikos of the year 740 (of the Seleucid era), which corresponds to 429 AD.[48]

Fig. 7 photo

The term 'martyrium' probably refers to a larger complex of which only the church was excavated.

Fig. 8

The important fifth-century phases of the two churches at Dibsi Faraj can be placed in the context of region-wide church building in this period. The construction of several fifth-century churches along the Euphrates is recorded following the building of the church dedicated to Sergius at Resafa by the Bishop Alexander of Hierapolis in 431. This also precipitated an increase in the number of pilgrimages to the tomb of the martyr.[49] The nearby location of Dibsi Faraj, architectural similarities between its churches and those at Resafa, and the reference to a man named Sergius in its citadel church indicates that the cult and its attraction to pilgrims played an important role in the development of religious architecture at such Middle Euphrates sites.[50]

According to the tradition of the cult of Saint Sergius, which became extremely popular in the fifth century, Sergius was a soldier, in the service of the emperor Maximian, when he and

[46] Donceel- Voûte 1988, 67–69.
[47] For the definition of *periodeutes*: Chorepiscopus, in Khazdan 1991, 430.
[48] Feissel forthcoming.
[49] Fowden 1999.
[50] Spread of the cult of Sergius: Fowden 1999.

a companion, Bacchus, were outed as Christians. After refusing to make a sacrifice to a pagan god, they were sent to Barbalisssus and, there, dressed in women's clothing and led through the streets of the fort. They were subsequently scourged until Bacchus died. Sergius was, finally, made to walk with nails in his feet to Resafa, where he was beheaded after further tortures.

The booming popularity of pilgrimages to Resafa, which would potentially have stopped at Dibsi Faraj, was not the only reason for the construction of Christian monuments at the settlement. More broadly, these monuments, embellished with mosaics donated by laymen, can also be understood in the context of the Christianisation of settlements in this region, which gathered pace in the fifth century.

Dibsi Faraj also benefitted from secular building work in the fourth to fifth centuries. In around the mid-fourth century, the settlement expanded for the first time beyond its walls with the building of a bath complex located west of the fortification. The exposed portion of the bath-house complex had five main components: 1) an entrance corridor or vestibule to the north, leading to; 2) a large courtyard or atrium to the east; 3) a cold room (*frigidarium*) with a bath, situated immediately south of the entrance, though accessed from the courtyard; 4) a large, central rectangular room, either a warm room (*tepidarium*) or hot room (*caldarium*), again accessible only from the east and sub-divided into northern and southern parts (possibly a combination of warm and hot rooms), with a small bath (possibly *laconicum* or a *sudatorium*) in its southern part; 5) an apsidal hot room (caldarium) to the south, accessible possibly only from the room to the north. The furnace (*praefurnium*) which probably lay on the south (or possibly the east) side of the *caldarium* was not revealed by the excavation, though there was some evidence to confirm that it was located there, mostly represented by the context with ashes i.e. to the south (Fig. 9).

This bath complex was abandoned in the middle of the fifth century when new baths were built outside of the north-eastern gate of the citadel. These were dated by an inscription at their entrance to 764 of the Seleucid era i.e. AD 452/453.[51]

Fig. 9a phase plan

Fig. 9b

[51] Feissel forthcoming.

These new baths were built in brick and decorated with mosaics which were mostly preserved. The complex contained a *frigidarium*, connected to a vestibule that conducted heat to three hot rooms.

That the outstanding fourth- and fifth-century architectural works at Dibsi Faraj included bathing facilities and churches, some of them extramural, can be related to the generally peaceful situation on the eastern frontier. Even the fourth-century Roman-Persian wars, which raged from 338–50 and 359–63, consisted mostly of attrition campaigns and sieges in Upper Mesopotamia, rather than the Middle Euphrates.[52] Moreover, the emperor Julian's ill-fated invasion of the Persian empire along the Euphrates in 363 by-passed the stretch of the river on which Dibsi Faraj was located.[53] According to Ammianus, Julian and his army crossed the Euphrates near Hierapolis, and, having passed through Batnae, proceeded down the River Balikh to Callinicum. From Callinicum, Julian led the army along the left bank of the Middle Euphrates to Circesium and then across the Khabur to Persian territory.[54]

While no major fortification work took place during the reign of Constantius II, the emperor divided what had been the province of Syria Coele into three new provinces, one of which was Euphratensia, comprising the Middle Euphrates frontier region.[55] The main military commander responsible for these three provinces was the *dux Syriae et Euphratensis*, who had his headquarters at Callinicum, Euphratensia, although he was also sometimes based at Chalcis in Syria I.[56] This provincial reorganisation shows a recognition of the strategic importance of the Middle Euphrates region. Indeed, even though there were no major Roman-Persian wars post-363, isolated attacks on the Middle Euphrates region by non-Persian groups are recorded in our sources. The Huns who invaded Roman territory via the Caucasus in 395, travelled down the Upper and Middle Euphrates before attacking Euphratensia and Syria.[57] During the brief Roman-Persian conflict of 421–22, the Persians' Lakhmid Arab allies tried to persuade the Persians to invade Syria via the Middle Euphrates. There is no evidence, however, that this actually took place.[58] Instead, the Lakhmids were defeated by a Roman force, presumably on or near the Middle Euphrates in which many of them drowned trying to escape. When the

[52] Fourth-century Roman-Persian wars: Matthews 1989, esp. Part 1; Dignas and Winter 2007, ch.3.2; Isaac 1997, 437–460. Contemporary accounts: Dodgeon and Lieu 1991, chs.7–9.
[53] Smith 1999.
[54] Ammianus' account of Julian's expedition: Amm. marc. 23.2–25.3.
[55] Comfort 2008, 270.
[56] Schwarze 2017, 308.
[57] Greatrex and Lieu 2002, 17–19.
[58] Shahîd 1989, 26–35.

Lakhmids attacked Euphratensia in 498, they were again defeated, this time by the Roman *dux Syriae et Euphratensis* at Resafa.[59]

Nevertheless, Hun threats from the north to both Roman and Persian empires meant that the peace they agreed in 363 was maintained for the most part during the next 139 years.[60] The consequent lack of major re-fortification work at Dibsi Faraj was typical for the region. Some Middle Euphrates forts, Pagnik Oreni, for instance, were even abandoned in the fifth century, and others likely to have fallen into disrepair.[61]

At the same time, the construction of the bathing establishment at Dibsi Faraj, the proliferation of coin finds at the site,[62] and finds relating to artisanal and commercial activity, can be understood in the context of the economic boom, enjoyed by the eastern Mediterranean and Near Eastern provinces in this period. Indeed, northern Oriens, although partly a borderland zone, was one of the breadbaskets of the empire, a tax producing rather than consuming area.[63] As well as being agriculturally productive, this was a commercially vital region, crossed by trading networks linking the Mediterranean and the Near East.[64] Bearing in mind that the Euphrates was one of these routes, and nearby Callinicum one of the official Roman-Persian trading depots, it is unsurprising that Dibsi Faraj shows sign of expansion across the fourth and fifth centuries.[65]

Legislative decrees issued in 414 addressing the wanton or corrupt behaviour of the *dux Syriae et Euphratensis* and his men bolster an impression that even the military could find time to enjoy themselves.[66] The former was accused of misappropriating public funds for the construction of private bathing facilities, and the latter of spending months on end in Hierapolis (where they were presumably having a lot of fun judging by the complaint received in Constantinople from the provincial governor) when they were supposed to be transporting wild beasts to Constantinople.[67] It is not hard to imagine the occupants of the Dibsi Faraj *principia* enjoying themselves in similar ways.

The Anastasian phase

[59] Shahîd 1989, 120–125.
[60] Dignas and Winter 2007, 192–193; Chrysos 1993, 183; Sarris 2011, 125–126.
[61] Harper 1977, 455.
[62] *ca*. 980 coins were found during the excavation (Munzi forthcoming).
[63] Decker 2007; Decker 2009; Wickham 2005, 609–626; Walmsley 2007; Mango 2011.
[64] Comfort 2008, 244–258; Pollard 2000, 175–177; Banaji 2016, 78–86.
[65] *Cod. Iust.* 4.36.4. Discussion: Pollard 2000, 215–216.
[66] *Cod. Theod.* 7.11.2 and 15.11.2.
[67] Presumably lions, which still inhabited the Euphrates Valley in the nineteenth century (Comfort 2008, 196).

During the reign of Anastasius (491–518), the site was significantly re-fortified. The wall was reconstructed with major work taking place primarily in its south-eastern sector. While the wall was rebuilt in masonry, the Diocletianic towers were cut down to their foundations and larger towers erected in their place. At the same time, the circular corner towers were replaced by hexagonal towers and larger rectangular towers were placed at greater intervals. The gateways were also modified, in particular the central gate, which received a large freestanding brick redoubt that served to protect water supply shafts.

fig. 10 (a-b)

The eastern gateway, finally, was reduced to a postern.

In one of his preliminary reports, Harper indicated that this re-building work was Justinianic.[68] This followed on from his identification of the site with Neocesarea and the fact that this was named by Procopius among the Middle Euphrates sites whose defences were upgraded by the emperor Justinian (527–565). However, this dating is placed in doubt by the archaeological evidence. In particular, an inscribed military edict and the stratigraphy recorded during the excavation indicate that the reconstruction work was instead Anastasian.[69]

The identification of several fragments of a Greek inscription is an especially important element in confirming the site's military function during the reign of Anastasius. According to analysis by Denis Feissel, the inscription is part of the law Anastasius promulgated to protect the *limitanei*.[70] The inscription at Dibsi only preserves some lines, but Denis Feissel has been able to decipher almost the full text by comparing these to the more complete versions of the same inscription found at Qasr Al-Hallabat, Bostra and Umm el Jimal in Jordan.[71] The heading of the inscription leaves no doubt that the emperor Anastasius was the author of this law. Though some chapters of this decree have been entirely lost (maybe less than 20%), we are now in a position to reconstruct 135 lines, or 1,400 words, of the first part without interruption.

The Anastasian refortification of Dibsi Faraj is understandable in light of the outbreak of war between the Roman and Persian empires in 502. The ensuing four-year conflict was initiated by the Persian king Kavadh, who invaded Roman Armenia and Mesopotamia in 502–

[68] Harper 1975, 325–327.
[69] Munzi forthcoming – the highest number of coins recorded from the excavation date from the reign of Anastasius: around half of the 130 Byzantine coins.
[70] Feissel forthcoming.
[71] On the nature, content and chronology of the text: Arce, Feissel, and Weber 2014.

503 and captured a series of major cities by siege, including Theodosiopolis and Amida.[72] Kavadh was motivated by a need to bolster his domestic political standing following a rebellion which had overthrown him, temporarily, in 496.[73] Kavadh thus used the Romans' refusal to contribute to the defence of the Caspian Gates pass, threatened by Hun raiders from the Eurasian Steppe, as a pretext for his 502-invasion.[74] Most of the 502–506 war was fought to the north, in Roman Armenia and Mesopotamia, although the Middle Euphrates did feature on two occasions. In 503/504 Kavadh took his army back to Persian territory via the River Balikh-Middle Euphrates route following his failed siege of Edessa;[75] and in 502 the Lakhmids crossed the river on their way to Osroene, from which they carried off 18,500 prisoners according to the *Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*.[76]

Following the war, the defences of the Middle Euphrates were upgraded significantly as part of a wider programme of fortification work in the eastern frontier provinces.[77] Most of this work had been completed by the 530s. Anastasius (491–518) and his successors Justin I (518–27) and Justinian (527–65) organised this building programme in response to the ease with which the Persians had captured major cities in Armenia and Mesopotamia in 502–504.[78]

Fig. 11

While Procopius' *Buildings* attributes most of this fortification work to Justinian, archaeological investigations make clear that a major initial wave was carried out by Anastasius.[79] The addition of larger projecting towers, of different shapes, and larger walls, incorporating a larger intramural area as at Dibsi Faraj, were developments typical of this period. At Zenobia, for instance, the hilltop acropolis was now encircled by the early sixth-century city fortification, which included 30 projecting rectangular towers and 6 gates.[80] The

[72] 502–506 war: Greatrex 1998, ch.5.
[73] Börm 2007, 93; Daryaee 2014, 26–29.
[74] Greatrex 1998, 8–19, 76–79; Meier 2009, 174–194. See also Börm 2008, arguing that the Persians demanded money from Rome mainly as a symbol of their own superiority.
[75] Greatrex 1998, 105–107.
[76] Josh. Styl. 52.
[77] Sauer et al. 2017, 246, have recently played down the Romans' military infrastructure and capability in Late Antiquity, pointing to the lack of evidence for large, 'organised' military bases compared to the Early Imperial period. But, while there can be no doubting the impressive infrastructural works of the Sasanians, another of the paper's key points, Roman fortifications were more sophisticated and monumental in Late Antiquity than they had been in previous periods, even if they enclosed smaller spaces, and soldiers were based in fortress cities as well as purpose-built military bases. For more detailed argument: Sarantis 2013b.
[78] Sixth century building work in Armenia and Upper Mesopotamia: Sarantis 2013a, 341–348. Key works include: Whitby 1986a; Comfort 2008, esp. 229–243; Crow 2007; Howard-Johnston 2013, 872–884.
[79] Ulbert 2000; Croke and Crow 1983; Meier 2009, 212–213.
[80] Lauffray 1983, part II.

walls at Resafa have also been attributed to the reign of Anastasius and, once again included thicker, larger fortifications, and projecting prow-shaped, rectangular and hexagonal towers.[81] The U-Shaped towers at Palmyra, seem likely to have been constructed at some stage from 506 to the 530s.[82] These early sixth-century fortifications were in most cases built with more durable and sophisticated masonry techniques than the Tetrarchic-era defences, with ashlar blocks instead of mudbrick on the outer faces and, in places, *opus mixtum* with brick courses.

Epigraphic, legislative and literary evidence referring to eastern fortification works makes clear that these were organised, funded and implemented on a local level, even if initiated by the imperial authorities.[83] While building inscriptions on occasion acknowledge the distant authority of the emperor, they also refer to the direct role of local military commanders, administrative officials, and architects. The best example is the inscription from Chalcis, which mentions a general named Longinus, an ex-consul, Anastasius, and Isidore, an engineer, probably the famous military architect, Isidore the Younger, also responsible for fortification work at Zenobia according to Procopius.[84] Literary sources, meanwhile, acknowledge the role of bishops in initiating infrastructural works at sites such as Resafa and Dara.[85] Non-official secular elites, such as Thomas, attested in the acropolis inscription at Androna, could also be responsible for such defensive works.[86] While we lack fortification inscriptions at Dibsi Faraj, it is not hard to imagine a combination of a local military official, leading churchmen, and the lay individuals responsible for donating mosaics to the basilica contributing in various ways to this project.

The publication of the Anastasian edict at Dibsi Faraj, as at other eastern borderland sites, can be understood as another way in which the imperial authorities sought to assert stronger control over the supply, discipline and accountability of frontier military divisions and their administrative staff following the renewal of war with Persia.[87] The edict in question, published also at sites in Jordan, as mentioned above, dates to 492 or 507.[88] Some have preferred a 490s context for Anastasian military edicts, based on the fact that most of his military supply-

[81] Konrad, Baldus, and Ulbert 2001, 14–15; Gussone and Sack 2017, 125–127.
[82] See nn.25 and 40 above.
[83] Zanini 2003, esp. 218–220 on the centre-periphery interactions involved in the implementation of even major works such as Dara. For a discussion of local contributions to fortification work in the Balkans: Sarantis 2016, 219–224.
[84] Chalcis inscription: Feissel 2000, 98; *IGLS* 348–349. Isidore the Younger: Martindale 1992, 724–725. Zenobia fortification work: Procop. *Aed.* 2.8.11–25.
[85] Dara: Zach. 7.6. Resafa works and role of bishops: Gussone and Sack 2017, esp.124.
[86] *IGLS* 1682. Discussion: Mango 2017, 202.
[87] Feissel 2014; Shahîd 1989, 131–133.
[88] Text: Marcillet-Jaubert 1982. Dating: Feissel 2014, 34. Context and discussion of the al-Hallabat imperial edict: Arce, Feissel, and Weber 2014. Bosra inscription: *IGLS* 9045–9046.

related legislation was published in this decade.[89] While this is plausible, a date of 507 would make more sense in the context of the post-war fortification and recovery programme, especially given that the edict sought to, fundamentally, improve the conditions and protect the rights of frontier *limitanei* soldiers. Moreover, a number of Anastasius' key supply and corruption-related decrees could be dated to any time between 491 and 505.[90] Whatever the case, the edict confirms the continued presence of a military garrison, apparently comprising *limitanei* troops, at Dibsi Faraj in the early sixth century. Interestingly, the only edited section from the edict found at al-Hallabat referring to the province of Euphratensis concerns the supply and payment of the *dux* and his soldiers.[91]

While its refortification work is typical, Dibsi Faraj differs from some the other major sites in its lack of a major church building drive in the Anastasian period. Major new churches and episcopal complexes at Palmyra and Resafa were erected at this time.[92] However, in spite of the lack of similar activity at Dibsi Faraj, its fifth-century churches remained in use and there is no reason to suppose that the site did not remain an important stopping point on the pilgrimage route to Resafa.[93]

The post-Anastasian sixth century

Even though the remainder of the sixth century witnessed few architectural changes at the site, the enlargement of the baths of the *principia*, discussed above in the earlier phase, represented a significant development.

These new structures were added to the west of the complex, covering an area of 500 square meters. They included a *caldarium*, a *tepidarium* and a hypocaust. Their floors and walls were originally covered with marble opus sectile, which was almost entirely robbed in the Islamic period. This is the only major building activity identified during the excavation which seems to have been carried out in the Justinianic era.

As well as the renovation of the *principia* baths, finds at the site suggest that it continued to have a military function throughout the sixth century. Artefacts dating to the Early Byzantine period include: a copper alloy bucket, apparently a component typical of a military officer's equipment; several fibulae including a bronze crossbow fibula worn usually by rank and file soldiers or officers; and a bone pin with a grooved collar and teardrop-shaped head, common

[89] Onur 2016, 188–189.
[90] e.g. *Cod. Iust.* 12.37.16.
[91] *SEG* 32, 1554B, 6.
[92] Palmyra church in the Temple of Bel: Jastrzębowska 2013. Resafa: Gussone and Sack 2017, 124–127.
[93] Importance of the Saint Sergius cult at Resafa and other Syrian-Mesopotamian frontier bases: Fowden 1999.

from eastern Mediterranean contexts, and apparently introduced to western Europe by Syrian soldiers.[94]

The renovation of the baths of the *principia* at Dibsi Faraj and its apparently continued military function can be understood in the context of further military insecurity. Roman-Persian warfare broke out again during the reign of Justinian, the 527–32 war being the first of four more major wars across the sixth century (527–32, 540–545, 548–56 and 573–91).[95] While the second of these wars mainly affected Lazica, south of the Caucasus Mountains, the others featured more regular Persian and Lakhmid Arab attacks on the Middle Euphrates region and northern Syria than had the fourth century or Anastasian wars. Indeed, following in Shapur I's footsteps, the Persian kings, Kavadh (488–531) and Khusro I (531–79), launched invasions of Roman Syria along the river in 531, 540, 542 and 573.

In 531, a Persian-Lakhmid army commanded by the general Azarethes was halted at Chalcis by an army led by the Roman general, Belisarius.[96] Belisarius proceeded to shadow the Persian force as it retreated along the Middle Danube via Barbalissus. Reluctantly, Belisarius was persuaded by his troops to fight a battle with the Persians on the right bank of the Euphrates opposite Callinicum.[97] This bloody encounter concluded in a Pyrrhic victory for the Persians, the remnants of the Roman army attempting to flee across the Euphrates, many drowning in the process.

In 540, Khusro I led another attack on Syria via the Middle Euphrates.[98] By-passing the heavily defended city of Circesium, he nevertheless sacked Sura, and ended up capturing or holding to ransom the major cities of northern Syria, west of the Euphrates bend, including Hierapolis, Beroea and Antioch.[99] After occupying southern Syrian cities such as Apamea, Khusro turned north, crossed the Middle Euphrates and launched a series of failed attacks on the major Mesopotamian fortress cities of Dara and Edessa. Khusro attacked again in 542, leading his army along the right bank of the Euphrates before besieging but failing to capture Resafa.[100] He was deterred from his plan to invade Palestine by the presence of Belisarius and his army in the region and so crossed the Euphrates and sacked Callinicum before retreating to Persian territory via Mesopotamia.

---

[94] For finds, see Leone forthcoming.
[95] Sixth-century Roman-Persian Wars: Greatrex 1998; Dignas and Winter 2007, ch.3.4; Whitby 1988, part III.
[96] Greatrex and Lieu 2002, 92–93. The most detailed contemporary account of the Callinicum campaign: Procop. *Pers*. 1.18.
[97] The Battle of Callinicum: Greatrex 1998, 200–207; Rubin 1960, 287–289; Shahîd 1995, 134–142; Whitby 2018, 1205–1208. Contemporary accounts: Malalas 18.60; Procop. *Pers.* 1.17.30–56; Zach. 9.4.
[98] Contemporary accounts: Greatrex and Lieu 2002, 103–108. See also Börm 2006.
[99] Sack of Antioch, 540: Downey 1961, 542–544; Börm 2007, 172–175; Whitby 2018, 1208–1210. This event as part of the 540/42 turning point in the reign of Justinian according to: Meier 2003, 649–650.
[100] Procop. *Pers.* 2. 20–21; Zach. 10.8.

A third Persian incursion into Syria via the Middle Euphrates took place in 573.[101] After travelling along the river, Khusro I divided his army at Circesium, leading one part of it up the Khabur valley towards Dara which eventually fell after a long siege, and sending another along the Middle Euphrates under the general Adarmahan to invade Syria. Our main source for this attack, John of Ephesus, only specifically mentions the sack of Apamea although he refers vaguely to the destruction of many other fortresses and villages.[102] Finally, Khusro II, fleeing the rebel general Bahram, travelled to Roman territory via the Middle Euphrates in 591.[103] He was received by the local Roman commander Probus at Circesium, before moving on to Hierapolis where he met the general of the Roman eastern field army, Comentiolus.

The Middle Euphrates was also attacked by the Persian-backed Lakhmid confederation of Arab tribes, ruled by the formidable Al-Mundhir III (503/505–54) in 518/19, 525 and 529.[104] On the latter occasion, Al-Mundhir attacked the village of Amis between Chalcis and Antioch, carrying off 400 virgins and an anchorite named Dodo according to *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor*.[105] In 531, in a repeat of the Hun incursion of 395, the Sabir Huns invaded from the north, crossing the Euphrates and raiding Euphratesia and Cilicia.[106]

Dibsi Faraj would surely have been affected by a number of these attacks, especially those in 531 and 540. It is therefore, surprising perhaps, that, in spite of work expanding its *principia*, there is no material evidence for further fortification work. Procopius' *Buildings* records Justinianic building work at the site, stating that, as at Zenobia, the walls were low and constructed of loose stones, before enjoying a major Justinianic renovation.[107] While this is clearly a rhetorical ploy to exaggerate Justinian's achievements, the construction of a new, more monumental northern wall at Zenobia, with larger projecting towers, has indeed been attributed to his reign.[108] Therefore, while there was no obvious second phase at the Anastasian walls of Dibsi Faraj, it is not impossible that more minimal renovation work took place at some stage later in the sixth century.

Moreover, in addition to Zenobia, there is good archaeological and epigraphic evidence for another wave of eastern frontier fortification work across the region during the reign of Justinian (527–65). This includes the newer, taller arcaded fighting platforms at Dara and the

---

[101] Greatrex and Lieu 2002, 146–147.
[102] Joh. Eph. 6.6.
[103] Theoph. Sim. 4.10.4–11.
[104] Sources for and historiography on raids of 518/19 and 525: Greatrex 1998, 131 n.30; and Greatrex et al. 2011, 297 n.66; Shahîd 1995, 43–45. 529: Greatrex et al. 2011, 298 n.70.
[105] Zach. 8.5.
[106] Contemporary accounts: Zach. 9.6; Malalas 18.70. Historiography: Greatrex et al. 2011, 328 n.92.
[107] Procop. *Aed.* 2.8.8–25.
[108] Lauffray 1983, esp. Part II, Ch.4; Ulbert 2000, 141.

enlargement of and addition of vaulting to the towers at Resafa.[109] Sura acquired a larger, *ca*. 39.4 ha fortified annexe to the west of the initial fortress-canabae complex, dated by the excavators to the Justinianic era.[110] The U-shaped towers at Palmyra, as mentioned earlier, could date from any time in the early sixth century.[111] While many of these sites on or near to the frontier seem likely to have been renovated in the earlier part of Justinian's reign, from 527–540, a later wave of fortification work is attested epigraphically in northern Syrian regions to the west.[112] The building inscriptions at Chalcis, Hierapolis, Androna and Cyrrhus are dated between the late 540s and 559.[113] The latter works were probably constructed in the aftermath of the Persian invasions of 540 and 542.

The socio-economic impact of Persian and Lakhmid invasions on northern Syria is suggested by signs of socio-economic stagnation at major cities such as Antioch and Apamea.[114] The considerable booty, prisoners, and, in the case of Antioch, architectural works, the Persians exacted during their attacks in 540 and 573 meant that these were the most traumatic military episodes the region had experienced since Shapur I's raid in 252. There are no signs of destruction or major socio-economic dislocation at Dibsi Faraj, although there are fewer coins dated to the post-Justinianic later sixth-century phase and the main intramural church was razed to the ground at some stage.[115] The apparent continuity at the site mirrors the general trend observed at sites along the nearby *Strata Diocletiana*.[116] This may be explained by the fact that the interior, wealthier Syrian Levantine provinces were the main targets of Lakhmid and Persian raiding, frontier fortresses along the Euphrates often being by-passed by enemy forces.

In addition, this northern sector of the sub-Euphratean eastern *limes* shows no signs of abandonment by the *limitanei* frontier forces in the sixth century, unlike the southern, *limes Arabicus*, which by the mid sixth century at the latest had apparently lost an overt military function.[117] While the Ghassanid Arab phylarchs may also have been responsible for defending the northern section of the *limes* by the later sixth century, as is apparent from the palace /

---

[109] Dara: Whitby 1986b; Keser-Kayaalp and Erdogan 2017, 155. Resafa: Gussone and Sack 2017, 127–130; Konrad, Baldus, and Ulbert 2001, 14–15; Karnapp 1976.
[110] Konrad 1999, 398–400.
[111] See nn.22 and 36 above.
[112] For the earlier wave: nn.77-78 above.
[113] Cyrrhus: Alpi 2016. Androna: n.86 above. Hierapolis: Mouterde et al. 1945, 209, n.39. Chalcis: n.84 above.
[114] Foss 1997, 190–197 and 205–226; Kennedy 1985, 149–163; Liebeschuetz 1988, more recently Walmsley 2007 and 2013. Earthquakes such as those in 526 and 528, also caused damage at northern Syrian cities, such as Antioch, but there is no evidence they affected areas as far away as the Middle Euphrates: e.g. Ambraseys 2009, 184–185.
[115] Coins: Munzi forthcoming. Destruction at intramural church: Harper 1975, 333.
[116] Konrad 1999, 408–410.
[117] Arce 2015 sees this development as a consequence of Justinian's Ghassanid policy. More recently: Whately 2013 and forthcoming a and forthcoming b.

reception hall of al-Mundhir III just outside Resafa, it resulted in less obvious changes to the topography of sites along the *Strata* or the Middle Euphrates.[118]

The seventh century

Stratigraphically it has been extremely difficult to single out specifically seventh-century developments at the site. It has, however, been possible to identify some changes at the two basilicas. The mosaic depicting a portico in the elevated apse of the extramural martyr church has been the subject of discussion by Donceel-Voûte. She considered the mosaics from Dibsi Faraj in her corpus of church mosaics of Syria and Lebanon and proposed that this mosaic dated later than the fifth-century foundation of the church.[119] She pointed out that its architectural iconography has parallels in manuscript illustrations, in particular the tables of Canons – Vat Syr 268, dating to the thirteenth century (fig.9). However, representations of porticos in these later manuscripts are normally associated with human figures. The aniconic representation of a portico found in the apse at Dibsi Faraj should instead be dated on stylistic grounds to the seventh century according to Donceel-Voûte.[120] This is confirmed by the stratigraphy, which shows that, at this time, the apse of the church was elevated, a tomb placed next to it and this new mosaic laid.

By this phase, the citadel basilica, meanwhile, had already been abandoned. A large L-shaped building was constructed on top of it following the Arab occupation. The function of this structure is difficult to identify, although it is imposing in size and thus clearly significant. L-shaped buildings appear commonly in the early Islamic period.[121]

The continued intramural and extramural works at Dibsi took place against a backdrop of enormous political upheaval in the East. From 603–628, Khusro II became the first Persian ruler in Late Antiquity to attempt the all-out conquest of the Roman Near East.[122] To this end, he spent seven years reducing Mesopotamia and Armenia before breaching the Middle Euphrates frontier in 610 and conquering Syria over the next two to three years. From that point, the Middle Euphrates featured little in a war that was fought predominantly in Asia Minor and the Transcaucsus.

---

[118] Ghassanids and northern Syrian defence: Shahîd 1995, Chs.4–6. For criticism of Shahîd 1995: Whittow 1999, esp. 207 and 212–215. Al-Mundhir reception hall: Konrad 2015; Brands 1998.
[119] Donceel-Voûte 1988, 85–87.
[120] Donceel-Voûte 1988, 85–87.
[121] Eger 2015, 252. Unfortunately, the function of these buildings is unclear.
[122] Howard-Johnston 2010, 436–445; Kaegi 2003, chs. 3–5; Greatrex and Lieu 2002, chs.13–14.

The peace of 630 was short-lived, however, in light of the Early Islamic conquests which followed from *ca.* 632.[123] After four centuries of remarkable geopolitical stability, the Near East now witnessed a major change to its strategic geography with the collapse of the Sasanian Persian empire and the rise of the Umayyad Arab Caliphate. However, once again, it is unlikely that the Middle Euphrates region suffered during the Early Islamic wars of conquest. Most of the major fighting took place in the Roman Levantine provinces and Persian southern Mesopotamia.

While coin hoards in northern Syria and destruction evidence and settlement changes in Asia Minor demonstrate the impact of the Persian war in those regions, Dibsi Faraj was typical of the Middle Euphrates and northern Mesopotamian regions in showing no sign of major economic dislocation.[124] Coin finds, albeit fewer in number, and work at the extra mural basilica demonstrate that life went on at the site without much disruption. This can again be understood in a regional context. Longer-term, the Christian Arab tribes on both sides of the Middle Euphrates held out against Islamicisation and the region north of the Middle Euphrates, at least, was ruled with a soft touch by the Umayyads in the second half of the seventh century.[125] Survey evidence suggests settlement pattern continuity around Edessa, and increase along the Balikh and Khabur valleys and other areas of the Middle Euphrates.[126] This is bolstered by textual evidence for the continued wealth and vibrancy of secular elites at cities like Edessa and of Christian monastic cultures on and around the Tur Adbin holy mountain.[127] Along and south of the Middle Euphrates, some cities were abandoned, including Sura. However, others were re-purposed by the Early Islamic rulers, Resafa and Callinicum-Raqqa being the most spectacular examples.[128]

Conclusions: Dibsi Faraj in its historical context

The site of Dibsi Faraj provides us with a unique set of data for a fortified site between the *Strata Diocletiana* and the Middle Euphrates bend. The evidence from Dibsi Faraj thus

[123] Howard-Johnston 2010; Donner 1981; Hoyland 2015.
[124] See n.114 above for the impact of warfare on northern Syria. Continuity in northern Oriens: Decker 2007; Decker 2009; Wilkinson and Tucker 1995; Morony 2004.
[125] Wickham 2005, 778–780.
[126] Wilkinson and Algaze 1990; Kennedy 2011.
[127] Edessa: Segal 1970. Tur Adbin: Palmer 1990.
[128] Callinicum-Raqqa: Mango 1991; Meinecke 1991; Heidemann 2006. Resafa: Brands 2011.

augments research at Zenobia, Resafa and the *Strata Diocletiana* to enrich our understanding of the northern Syrian borderlands.

While its Tetrarchic and early sixth-century fortification works were typical of the region, Dibsi Faraj was distinctive in other ways. Unlike comparable sites in the region, it did not transform markedly in size, location or character between the fourth and sixth centuries. Whereas legionary forts like Resafa evolved into larger settlements dominated by churches, Dibsi Faraj retained its largely military character across the period according to the continued functioning of the *principia*. It only acquired two churches, one of which was extramural and experienced no new wave of church building in the sixth century. The lack of a bishop's name in the fifth-century building inscription from the extramural church could mean that this was not a bishopric. Nevertheless, the architecture features of and epigraphic evidence from the two churches which were built reveal possible religious connections with Resafa and the cult of St Sergius. This is unsurprising bearing in mind that Dibsi was on the route taken by pilgrims from the West to Sergius' shrine at Resafa.

Otherwise, it is the secular building work at the site which impresses most. The monumental fortifications, *principia* and sophisticated water system bear witness to considerable investment. The water system consisted of cisterns and water channels developed around the site to supply its numerous baths, some of which were lavishly decorated. Indeed, the addition of a new bathing complex to the *principia*, expensively decorated with marble, was the most conspicuous sixth-century expenditure on an architectural structure. The presence of baths outside of the city wall does not indicate that the defensive citadel fell out of use, but rather the existence of suburban or extra mural quarters. Similar evidence has been identified for instance at Kifrin, where archaeologists have recorded another albeit smaller and shorter-lasting citadel on the Euphrates.[129]

This all suggests the presence of a discrete number of wealthy occupants at the site who would have at least partly contributed to the initiation, organisation, funding and erection of infrastructural works. The ruling elite presumably consisted of military officers or military administrative staff, to whom the majority of the provisions in the Anastasian military edict were addressed. Indeed, the public display of the inscribed military law of Anastasius along with the refurbishment and reinforcement of the citadel identify this as an important base of the *limitanei*.[130]

---

[129] Lippolis 2007.

[130] Although field army units were also permanently stationed at bases in this region by the sixth century, for example, at Palmyra: Malalas 18.2. Roman strategic deployments in northern Syria: Liebeschuetz 1977, 495–497.

Taking the evidence from other sites into account, these provisions bolster the impression that an important secular, sometimes military elite controlled northern Syrian sites along and in the hinterland of the Middle Euphrates. This includes epigraphic evidence from Chalcis, Cyrrhus, Hierapolis and Androna, and material and textual evidence for the estate of Magnos the Syrian, as well as other apparent desert villas in the Syrian steppe such as ibn al-Wardan.[131] Even if the Ghassanid federates took over this section of the *limes,* there is no evidence that they were organised in dramatically different ways from Roman soldiers.[132] Whatever the identity of elites based at sites such as Dibsi, they were presumably responsible for liaising with and managing tribal groups in the desert regions. Policing the area and ensuring the security of commercial routes would have been important priorities in addition to defending approaches to the Roman empire from Persian and Lakhmid raiders.[133]

Local elite wealth is unsurprising bearing in mind the agricultural and commercial prosperity of northern Oriens. Indeed, the coin series at Dibsi Faraj peaks between the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century (59 coins) followed in number by those minted in the remainder of the sixth century (24 coins), indicating the economic vitality of the site in this period.[134] The settlement must have continued to be important in the Justinianic period, bearing in mind the refurbishment of the bathing complex just mentioned.

Finally, the fact that the site continued to function and receive renovation work across the late sixth and seventh centuries demonstrates that the Roman-Persian and Early Islamic wars did not necessarily have a long-term socio-economic impact on this region, as is assumed for other parts of northern Syria. Dibsi Faraj must have been affected in the short-term by the numerous Persian and Lakhmid Arab incursions. But the presence of wealthy elites, bound economically and, presumably, culturally to the region, would explain how such sites recovered from short-term shocks.[135]

---

[131] Inscriptions: see nn.84, 86 and 113 above. Magnos and other northern Syrian aristocracies: Kennedy 2010.

[132] Studies on the *limes Arabicus* sometimes assume that the Ghassanids ceased using fixed military bases (e.g. Arce 2015 seems to equate the employment of the Ghassanids with the cessation of military activity at the forts of the *limes Arabicus*). This overstates their nomadic lifestyle and ignores the fact that they were effectively a dimorphic chiefdom like the Lakhmids. On dimorphic Lakhmids: Fisher and Wood 2016; Rowton 1977. Sedentary Ghassanids: Shahîd 1984, Ch.4. The Ghassanids' ability to link the nomadic and sedentary worlds of the Syrian steppe prefaced the rise of the Umayyads: Whittow 1999, 224.

[133] Policing functions of frontier forts: Isaac 1990. Others, such as Parker 1991, stress the forts' broader strategic role in defending the empire against enemy raids. There is no reason why frontier forts could not have performed both functions. For a summary of the debate: Sarantis 2013a, 358–360.

[134] Munzi forthcoming.

[135] For a more detailed discussion of resilience in northern Oriens: Sarantis forthcoming.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Amm. marc. = Rolfe, John C. ed. and trans. 1963. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*. Cambridge MA. Harvard University Press.

Arr. *Anabasis* = Brunt, Peter A. ed. and trans. 1976. Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander.* Cambridge MA. Harvard University Press.

Cod. Iust. = Blume, Fred., Frier, Bruce W. *et al.*, ed. and trans. 2016. *The Codex of Justinian: a New Annotated Translation with Parallel Latin and Greek Text.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cod. Theod. = Mommsen, Theodor *et al.*, ed. 1905. *Theodosiani libri xvi cum constitutionibus Sirmondianis.* Berlin: Weidmann; Pharr, Clive, trans. 1952. *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Joh. Epiph. = Müller, Karl O. ed. 1878–85. *Fragmenta historicorum graecorum*, book IV, 272–76. Paris: Ambrosio Firmin-Didot.

Josh. Styl. = Trombley, Frank R. and Watt, John W., trans. *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite* (Translated Texts for Historians 32). Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Malalas = Thurn, Ioannes, ed. and trans. 2000. *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*. Berlin: W. de Gruyter; Jeffreys, Elizabeth, Jeffreys, Michael and Scott, Roger, trans. 1986. *The Chronicle of John Malalas* (Byzantina Australiensia 4). Melbourne and Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies.

Patrum Nicenorum Nomina Latine, Graece, Coptice, Syriace, Arabice, Armeniace, Teubner, Lipsia, H. Gelzer, H. Hingelfeld, O. Cuntz

Plin. *Nat. Hist.* = Rackham, Harris, ed. and trans. 1942. Pliny, *Natural History, Volume II: Books 3–7*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Ptol. *Geog.* = Stückelberger, Alfred and Mittenhuber, Florian, ed. and trans. 2009. *Klaudios Ptolemaios Handbuch der Geographie: Ergänzungsband mit einer Edition des Kanons bedeutender Städte*. Basel: Schwabe.

Procop. *Aed.* = Dewing, Henry B., ed. and trans. 1914–54. Procopius, *Buildings*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Procop. *Pers.* = Dewing, Henry B., ed. and trans. 1914–54. Procopius, *History of the Wars*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press; Kaldellis, Anthony, trans. 2014. *The Wars of Justinian*. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Strabo = Jones, Horace L. ed. and trans. 1930. Strabo, *Geography*, *Volume VII: Books 15–16.* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Theoph. Sim. = Whitby, Michael and Whitby, Mary, trans. 1986. *The History of Theophylact Simocatta: an English Translation with Introduction and Notes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; de Boor, Carl, ed. 1887. *Theophylacti Simocattae Historia*. Leipzig: Lipsiae.

Zach. = Brooks, Ernst W. ed. and trans. 1919–24. Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*: *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Paris: E Typographeo Reopublicae; Greatrex, Geoffrey, Phenix, Robert R., Horn, Cornelia and Brock, Sebastian P. trans. with notes and intr. 2011. *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor*..Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Secondary works

Alpi, Frédéric. 2016. “Les inscriptions justiniennes de Cyrrhus (Euphratésie).” *Syria: Archéologie, Art et Histoire* 93:171–84.

Ambraseys, Nicholas. 2009. *Earthquakes in the Mediterranean and Middle East: A Multidisciplinary Study of Seismicity up to 1900.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Arce, Ignacio. 2015. "Severan *Castra*, Tetrarchic *Quadriburgia*, Justinian *Coenobia*, and Ghassanid *Diyarat*: Patterns of Transformation of *Limes Arabicus* Forts During Late Antiquity." In *Roman Military Architecture on the Frontiers: Armies and Their Architecture in Late Antiquity*, edited by Rob Collins, Matthew Symonds and Meike Weber, 98–122. Oxford: Oxbow.

Arce, Ignacio, Denis Feissel, and Thomas M. Weber. 2014. *The Edict of the Emperor Anastasius I (491–518 AD): An Interim Report*. Amman: DAAD.

Banaji, Jairus. 2016. *Exploring the Economy of Late Antiquity: Selected Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bell, Gertrude. 1910. "The East Bank of the Euphrates from Tel Ahmar to Hit." *Geographical Journal* 36:513–37.

Börm, Henning. 2006. "Der Perserkönig im *Imperium Romanum*. Chosroes I. und der sasanidische Einfall in das Oströmische Reich 540 n. Chr." *Chiron* 36:299–328.

Börm, Henning. 2007. *Prokop und die Perser: Untersuchungen zu den römisch-sasanidischen Kontakten in der ausgehenden Spätantike*. Stuttgart: F. Steiner.

Börm, Henning. 2008. "„Es war allerdings nicht so, dass sie es im Sinne eines Tributes erhielten, wie viele meinten…" Anlässe und Funktion der persischen Geldforderungen an die Römer (3. Bis 6. Jh.)." *Historia* 57 (3):327–346.

Börm, Henning. 2016. "A Threat or a Blessing? The Sasanians and the Roman Empire." In *Diwan. Untersuchungen zu Geschichte und Kultur des nahen Ostens und des östlichen Mittelmeerraumes im Altertum. Festschrift für Josef Wiesehöfer zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Carsten Binder, Henning Börm and Andreas Luther, 615–46. Duisburg: Wellem Verlag.

Brands, Gunnar. 2011. "City and Territorium of Rusafa in Late Antiquity and Early Islam." In *Le Proche-Orient de Justinien aux Abassides, Actes du colloque international de Paris, Inha, 18–20 Octobre 2007*, edited by Antoine Borrut, Muriel Debié, Dominique Pieri and Jean-Pierre Sodini, 59–76.

Chapot, Victor. 1907. *La Frontiere de l'Euphrate de Pompee à la Conquete arabe*. Paris: Albert Fontemoing.

Chrysos, Evangelos K. 1993. "Räumung und Aufgabe von Reichsterritorien. Der Vetrag von 363." *Bonner Jahrbücher*: 165–202.

Comfort, Anthony. 2008. "Roads on the Frontier between Rome and Persia: Euphratensia, Osrhoene and Mesopotamia from AD 363 to 602." Ph.D, University of Exeter.

Comfort, Anthony, and Rifat Ergeç. 2001. "Following the Euphrates in Antiquity: North-South Routes around Zeugma." *Anatolian Studies* 51:19–50.

Croke, Brian, and James Crow. 1983. "Procopius and Dara." *Journal of Roman Studies* 73:143–59.

Crow, James. 2007. "Amida and Tropaeum Traiani: A Comparison of Late Antique Fortress Cities on the Lower Danube and Mesopotamia." In *The Transition to Late Antiquity: On the Danube and Beyond*, edited by Andrew Poulter, 435–55. Oxford: The British Academy.

Daryaee, Touraj. 2014. *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire*. 1st ed. London: I.B.Tauris.

Decker, Michael. 2007. "Frontier Settlement and Economy in the Byzantine East." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 61:217–267.

Decker, Michael. 2009. *Tilling the Hateful Earth: Agricultural Production and Trade in the Late Antique East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dignas, Beate, and Engelbert Winter. 2007. *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dodgeon, Michael H., and Samuel N. C. Lieu. 1991. *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars (AD 226–363): A Documentary History*. London: Routledge.

Donner, Fred McGraw. 1981. *The Early Islamic Conquests*, *Ebook Central*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Donceel- Voûte, Pauline 1988, *Les pavements des Eglises Byzantine de Syrie et du Lyban, Décor, archéologie et liturgie*, Louvain:Oleffe

Downey, Glanville. 1961. *A History of Antioch in Syria: From Seleucus to the Arab Conquest*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Dussaud, René. 1927. *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et médiévale*. Paris: Librarie OrientalistePaul Geuthner.

Edwell, Peter M. 2008. *Between Rome and Persia: The Middle Euphrates, Mesopotamia and Palmyra under Roman Control*. London: Routledge.
Eger, A. Asa. 2015. *The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier: Interaction and Exchange among Muslim and Christian Communities*. London: I.B. Tauris.
Fear, Andrew. 2007. "War and Society." In *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare, Volume 2*, edited by Philip Sabin, Van Wees, Hans and Whitby, Michael, 424–58. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Feissel, Denis. 2000. "Les édifices de Justinien au témoignage de Procope et de l'épigraphie." *Antiquité Tardive* 8:81–104.
Feissel, Denis. 2014. "The Reconstructed Text: A Unique Document on Military Administration in the Late Roman East." In *The Edict of the Emperor Anastasius I. (491–518 AD)*, edited by Ignacio Arce, Denis Feissel and Thomas M. Weber, 33–36. Amman: DAAD.
Feissel, Denis. forthcoming. "The Greek Inscriptions." In *The Excavation of Dibsi Faraj: Life in the Middle Euphrates*, edited by Anna Leone. Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks.
Fisher, Greg, and Philip Wood. 2016. "Writing the History of the "Persian Arabs": The Pre-Islamic Perspective on the "Naṣrids" of Al-Ḥīrah." *Iranian Studies* 49 (2):247–290.
Fowden, Elizabeth Key. 1999. *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.
Freedman, David Noel, and John M. Lundquist. 1979. *Archeological Reports from the Tabqa Dam Project - Euphrates Valley, Syria*. Cambridge MA: American Schools of Oriental Research.
Gawlikowski, Michal. 1996. "Thapsacus and Zeugma: The Crossing of the Euphrates in Antiquity." *Iraq* 58:123–133.
Golvin, Lucien. 1945. "À la recherche de la cité médiévale de Bâlis (Moyen-Euphrate)." In *Le Moyen Euphrate: Zone de Contacts et d'Exchanges. Syrie romaine*, 154–56. Paris: P. Geuthner.
Greatrex, Geoffrey. 1998. *Rome and Persia at War, 502–532*. Leeds: Francis Cairns.
Greatrex, Geoffrey, and Samuel N. C. Lieu. 2002. *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars: A Narrative Sourcebook*. London: Routledge.
Greatrex, Geoffrey, Robert R. Phenix, Cornelia B. Horn, Sebastian P. Brock, and Witold Witakowski. 2011. *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor: Church and War in Late Antiquity*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
Gregory, Shelagh. 1995. *Roman Military Architecture on the Eastern Frontier*. Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert.
Gussone, Martin , and Dorothée Sack. 2017. "Resafa / Syrien. Städtebauliche Entwicklung Zwischen Kultort Und Herrschaftssitz." In *New Cities in Late Antiquity: Documents and Archaeology*, edited by Efthymios Rizos, 117–36. Turnhout: Brepols.
Haarer, Fiona K. 2006. *Anastasius I: Politics and Empire in the Late Roman World*. Cambridge: Francis Cairns.
Harper, Richard P. 1974a. "Excavations at Dibsi Faraj, Northern Syria, 1972." *Les Annales archéologiques arabes syriennes* 24:25–29.
Harper, Richard P. 1974b. "Second Preliminary Report on Excavations at Dibsi Faraj." *Les Annales archéologiques arabes syriennes* 34:30–37.
Harper, Richard P. 1975. "Excavations at Dibsi Faraj, Northern Syria, 1972–1974: A Preliminary Note on the Site and Its Monuments with an Appendix." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 29:319–338. doi: 10.2307/1291379.
Harper, Richard P. 1977. "Two Excavations on the Euphrates Frontier 1968–1974: Pağnik Öreni (Eastern Turkey) 1968–1971 and Dibsi Faraj (Northern Syria) 1972–1974." In *Zu den Militärgrenzen Roms II. Vorträge des 10. internationalen Limeskongresses in der Germania Inferior*, edited by Dorothea Haupt and Heinz Günter Horn, 453–60. Köln: Rheinland-Verlag.
Harper, Richard P. 1980. "Athis-Neocaesareia-Qasrin-Dibsi Faraj." In *Le Moyen Euphrate: zones de contacts et d'échanges. Actes du colloque de Strasbourg, 10–12 Mars 1977*, edited by Jean Margueron. Leiden: Brill.
Hartmann, Udo. 2017. "The Third-Century 'Crisis'." In *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Battles*, edited by Michael Whitby and Harry Sidebottom, 1047–67. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
Heidemann, Stefan. 2006. "The Citadel of Al-Raqqa and Fortifications in the Middle Euphrates Area." In *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria. From the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*, edited by Hugh Kennedy, 122–50. Leiden: Brill.

Honigmann, E. 1934. “Thapsacos.” *Revue des études byzantines* 5A.1:1272–79.
Howard-Johnston, James. 2010. *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Howard-Johnston, James. 2013. “Military Infrastructure in the Roman Provinces North and South of the Armenian Taurus in Late Antiquity.” In *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives*, edited by Alexander Sarantis and Neil Christie, 853–92. Leiden: Brill.
Hoyland, Robert G. 2015. *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Isaac, Benjamin. 1990. *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Isaac, Benjamin. 1997. “The Eastern Frontier.” In *The Cambridge Ancient History, 13: The Late Empire, Ad 337–425*, edited by Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey, 437–60. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
James, Simon. 2011. “Strategems, Combat, and “Chemical Warfare” in the Siege Mines of Dura-Europos.” *American Journal of Archaeology* 115 (1):69–101.
Jastrzębowska, Elżbieta. 2013. “Christianisation of Palmyra: Early Byzantine Church in the Temple of Bel.” *Studia Palmyreńskie* 13:177–91.
Johnson, Stephen. 1983. *Late Roman Fortifications*. London: Batsford.
Juchniewicz, Karol, Khaled As'ad, and Khalil al Hariri. 2010. “The Defense Wall in Palmyra after Recent Excavations.” In *Studia Palmyrenskie XI*, edited by Michal Gawlikowski, 43–48. Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
Kaegi, Walter Emil. 2003. *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Kazhdan, Alexander P. ed. 1991. *Oxford Dictionary of Bizantium*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Karnapp, Walter. 1976. *Die Stadtmauer von Resafa in Syrien*, *Denkmäler antiker Architektur ; Bd. 11*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
Kennedy, Hugh. 2010. “Syrian Elites from Byzantium to Islam: Survival or Extinction?” In *Power and Politics in Early Islamic Syria*, edited by John Haldon, 181–200. Abdingdon: Routledge.
Kennedy, Hugh. 2011. “The Feeding of the Five Hundred Thousand: Cities and Agriculture in Early Islamic Mesopotamia.” *Iraq* 73:177–199.
Keser-Kayaalp, Elif, and Nihat Erdogan. 2017. “Recent Research on Dara/Anastasiopolis.” In *New Cities in Late Antiquity: Documents and Archaeology*, edited by Efthymios Rizos, 153–76. Turnhout: Brepols.
Konrad, Michaela. 1999. “Research on the Roman and Early Byzantine Frontier in North Syria.” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 2:392–410.
Konrad, Michaela, Hans Roland Baldus, and Thilo Ulbert. 2001. *Der Spätrömische limes in Syrien: archäologische Untersuchungen an den Grenzkastellen von Sura, Tetrapyrgium, Cholle und in Resafa*. Mainz: von Zabern.
Lauffray, Jean. 1983. *Halabiyya-Zenobia: place forte du Limes Oriental et la Haute-Mesopotamie au VIe Siècle*. Paris: Geuthner.
Leadbetter, Bill. 2009. *Galerius and the Will of Diocletian*. London: Routledge.
Lee, A. Doug. 2007. *War in Late Antiquity: A Social History*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Leone, Anna, ed. forthcoming. *The Excavation of Dibsi Faraj (Syria): Life on the Middle Euphrates (1st-13th Century AD)*. Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks.
Leriche, Pierre. 1993. “Techniques de guerre sasanianes et romaines à Doura-Europos.” In *L’armée romaine et les barbares du IIe au VIIe siècle*, edited by Françoise Vallet and Michel Kazanski, 83–100. Rouen: Association francaise d'archéologie mérovingienne et Musée des Antiquités nationales.
Liebeschuetz, John Hugo Wolfgang Gideon. 1977. “The Defences of Syria in the Sixth Century.” In *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms, 2. Vorträgd Des 10. internationalen Limeskongresses in der Germania Inferior*, edited by Dorothea Haupt and Heinz Günter Horn, 487–99. Köln: Rheinland-Verlag.
Lippolis, Carlo. 2007. “La fortezza romana di Kifrin.” In *Giornata Lincea in onore di Giorgio Gullini (Roma, 10 maggio 2006)*, 151–64. Rome: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei.
Mango, Marlia. 1991. “Kallinikos.” In *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, edited by Alexander Kazhdan, 1094. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mango, Marlia. 2011. “Byzantine Settlement Expansion in North Central Syria: The Case of Androna/Andarin.” In *Le Proche-Orient de Justinien aux Abbassides: peuplement et dynamiques spatiales*, edited by Antoine Borrut, 93–122. Turnhout: Brepols.

Mango, Marlia M. 2017. “Androna and the Late Antique Cities of Oriens.” In *New Cities in Late Antiquity: Documents and Archaeology*, edited by Efthymios Rizos, 187–204. Turnhout: Brepols.

Marcillet-Jaubert, Jean. 1982. “Les inscriptions greques de Hallabat, II.” *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 26:145–58.

Martindale, John Robert. 1992. *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire III, A.D. 527–641*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Matthews, John. 1989. *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Meier, Mischa. 2003. *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians: Kontingenzerfahrung und Kontingenzbewältigung im 6. Jahrhundert n. Chr*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Meier, Mischa. 2009. *Anastasios I.: die Entstehung des byzantinischen Reiches*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.

Meinecke, Michael. 1991. “Raqqa on the Euphrates. Recent Excavations at the Residence of Harun Er-Rashid.” In *The near East in Antiquity. German Contributions to the Archaeology of Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt II*, edited by Susanne Kerner, 17–32. Amman: Goethe-Institut Amman.

Millar, Fergus. 1993. *The Roman Near East, 31 B.C.-A.D. 337*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Morony, Michael. 2004. “Population Transfers between Sasanian Iran and the Byzantine Empire.” In *Convegno internazionale la Persia e Bisanzio: Roma, 14–18 Ottobre 2002*, 161–79. Rome: Academia nazionale dei Lincei.

Mouterde, René, A. Poidebard, J. Lauffray, and Soubhi Mazloum. 1945. *Le limes de Chalcis: organisation de la Steppe en Haute Syrie Romaine: documents aériens et épigraphiques*. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner.

Munzi, Massimiliano. forthcoming. “The Coins from Dibsi Faraj.” In *The Excavation of Dibsi Faraj: Life in the Middle Euphrates*, edited by Anna Leone. Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks.

Naval Intelligence Division, Great Britain. 1942. *Turkey*, *Geographical Handbook Series 507*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Onur, Fatih. 2016. *The Anastasian Military Decree from Perge in Pamphylia. Revised 2nd Edition*. Vol. 14.

Palmer, Andrew. 1990. *Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier: The Early History of Tur ʿabdin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Parker, S. Thomas. 1991. “The Nature of Roma’s Arabian Frontier.” In *Roman Frontier Studies 1989: Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies*, edited by Valerie A. Maxfield and Michael J. Dobson, 498–504. Exeter: Exeter University Press.

Pollard, Nigel. 2000. *Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians in Roman Syria*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Rowton, M. B. 1977. “Dimorphic Structure and the Parasocial Element.” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 36 (3):181–198.

Rubin, Berthold. 1960. *Das Zeitalter Iustinians*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Salway, Benet. 2005. “The Nature and Genesis of the Peutinger Map.” *Imago Mundi* 57 (2):119–135.

Sanders, Guy D.R., James Sarah A., Carter Johnson Alicia. 2017. *Corinth Excavation archaeological Manual*. Grand Forks: The Digital Press of the University of North Dakota

Sarantis, Alexander. 2013a. “Fortifications in the East: A Bibliographic Essay.” In *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives*, edited by Alexander Sarantis and Neil Christie, 317–70. Leiden: Brill.

Sarantis, Alexander. 2013b. “Waging War in Late Antiquity.” In *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives*, edited by Alexander Sarantis and Neil Christie, 1–85. Leiden: Brill.

Sarantis, Alexander. 2016. *Justinian's Balkan Wars: Campaigning, Diplomacy and Development in Illyricum, Thrace and the Northern World Ad 527–65*. Prenton: Francis Cairns publications.

Sarantis, Alexander. forthcoming. “The Socio-Economic Impact of Raiding on the Eastern and Balkan Borderlands of the Eastern Roman Empire, 502–602.” *Millennium*.

Sarantis, Alexander, and Neil Christie. 2013. “Fortifications in the West: A Bibliographic Essay.” In *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives*, edited by Alexander Sarantis and Neil Christie, 255–98. Leiden: Brill.
Sarris, Peter. 2011. *Empires of Faith: The Fall of Rome to the Rise of Islam, 500–700*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Sauer, Eberhard W., Jebrael Nokandeh, Konstantin Pitskhelauri, Ivane Javakhishvili, and Hamid O. Rekavandi. 2017. “Innovation and Stagnation: Military Infrastructure and the Shifting Balance of Power between Rome and Persia.” In *Sasanian Persia: Between Rome and the Steppes of Eurasia*, edited by Eberhard W. Sauer, 241–68. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Schwarze, Marcel F. 2017. *Römische Militärgeschichte 2: Studie zur römischen Armee und ihrer Organisation im Sechsten Jahrhundert n. Chr.* Pfungstadt: Books on Demand.
Segal, Judah B. 1970. *Edessa: 'The Blessed City'*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Seyrig, Henri. 1950. “Antiquités syriennes.” *Syria* 27 (3–4):229–52.
Shahîd, Irfan. 1984. *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.
Shahîd, Irfan. 1989. *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*. Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.
Shahîd, Irfan. 1995. *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*. Vol. 2.2. Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.
Smith, Roland R. R. 1999. “Telling Tales: Ammianus’ Narrative of the Persian Expedition of Julian.” In *The Late Roman World and Its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus*, edited by Jan W. Drijvers and David Hunt, 89–104. London: Routledge.
Talbert, Richard J. A. 2010. *Rome's World: The Peutinger Map Reconsidered*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Ulbert, Thilo. 2000. “Procopius, *De Aedificiis.* Einige Überlegungen zu Buch II, Syrien.” *Antiquité Tardive* 8:137–47.
Van Berchem, Denis. 1954. “Recherches sur la chronologie des enceintes de Syrie et Mésopotamie.” *Syria* 31 (3–4): 254–70.
Walmsley, Alan. 2007. *Early Islamic Syria: An Archaeological Assessment*. London: Duckworth.
Whately, Conor. 2013. “Organisation and Life in the Late Roman Military: A Bibliographic Essay.” In *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives*, edited by Alexander Sarantis and Neil Christie, 209–38. Leiden: Brill.
Whitby, Michael. 1986a. “Procopius and the Development of Roman Defences in Upper Mesopotamia.” In *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at the University of Sheffield, April 1986*, edited by David L. Kennedy and Philip Freeman, 717–35. Oxford: BAR.
Whitby, Michael. 1986b. “Procopius’ Description of Dara.” In *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at the University of Sheffield, April 1986*, edited by Philip Freeman and David L. Kennedy, 737–87. Oxford: BAR.
Whitby, Michael. 1988. *The Emperor Maurice and His Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Whitby, Michael. 2013. “Siege Warfare and Counter-Siege Tactics in Late Antiquity (Ca. 250–640).” In *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives*, edited by Alexander Sarantis and Neil Christie, 433–59. Leiden: Brill.
Whitby, Michael. 2018. “Justinian and Persia, 527–562.” In *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Battles*, edited by Michael Whitby and Harry Sidebottom, 1199–1213. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Whittow, Mark. 1999. “Rome and the Jafnids: Writing the History of a 6th-c. Tribal Dynasty.” In *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Work, vol.2*. JRA Supplementary Series 31, edited by John H. Humphrey, 207–24. Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology.
Wickham, Chris. 2005. *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400–800*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Wilkinson, T. J., and Guillermo Algaze. 1990. *Town and Country in Southeastern Anatolia*. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
Wilkinson, T. J., and D. J. Tucker. 1995. *Settlement Development in the North Jazira, Iraq: A Study of the Archaeological Landscape*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips.

Zanini, Enrico. 1995. “Il restauro giustinianeo delle mura di Palmyra.” In *Arte profana, arte sacra a Bisanzio*, edited by Antonio Iacobini and Enrico Zanini, 65–104. Rome: Argos.
Zanini, Enrico. 2003. “Christian Topography in the Late Antique Town: Recent Results and Open Questions.” In *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology*, edited by Luke Lavan and William Bowden, 196–224. Leiden: Brill.

List of Illustrations

Fig.1 – Map of the Region (by M. Brizzi)
Fig. 2 – Plan of the Citadel with excavated areas (Harper 1975) –areas 8 and 9 (extra-mural basilica is outside of this map. There are no plans indicating the exact position of the extra-mural basilica.
Fig. 3 – Aerial Photograph of the Citadel, in the lower left, overlooking the Euphrates (Harper’s Archive)
Fig. 4 – Aerial photograph of the Principia at the end of the excavation, during the inundation (Harper’s archive)
Fig. 5 – Aerial photograph of the citadel church (Harper’s archive)
Fig. 6 – Mosaic of the citadel church with inscriptions (Harper’s archive)
Fig. 7 – Inscription in the extra-mural basilica (Harper’s archive)
Fig.8 – Plan with mosaics of the extra=mural Basilica (Harper’s archive)
Fig. 9a – Area 3 – Structures outside of the citadel – phase 1 (elaborated from Harper’s archive drawings - Autocad – M. Brizzi)
Fig. 9b – Area 3 – phase 2 (elaborated from Harper’s archive drawings - Autocad M. Brizzi)
Fig. 10a – Area 4 – corner tower of the citadel built above the earlier square tower– Phase 2 (elaborated from Harper’s archive drawings -Autocad M. Brizzi)
Fig. 10b – Aerial photograph of corner tower (Harper’s archive)
Fig. 11 – 3D model obtained by a mosaic of aerial photographs (Harper-s archive- photoscan M. Brizzi)

Anna Leone, University of Durham
anna.leone@durham.ac.uk

Alexander Sarantis, Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz / Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz
sarantis@rgzm.de